

Message Text

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S/S - MR. FRY

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 100301

EXDIS, TOSEC 630

FOL REPEAT TUNIS 2917 SENT ACTION SECSTATE MAY 14

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S E C R E T TUNIS 2917

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, TS, US

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA'S PROJECTED VISIT TO U.S.

1. SUMMAR: DURING SEPARATE CALLS I MADE ON PRIME MINISTER NOUIRA AND FOREIGN MINISTER CHATTI MAY 13, THESE TWO OFFICIALS AGAIN SUGGEST POSTPONING PROJECTED BOURGUIBA VISIT TO U.S. UNTIL NOVEMBER. CHATTI SAID GEFINITE DECISION MUST BE MADE BY MAY 17 IN ORDER TO HAVE ADEQUATE TIME TO SETP UP ALTERNATE PLANS. I INFORMED HIM THAT SINCE WE UNLIKELY BE ABLE TO PROVIDE RESPONSE BY THEN, WE WOULD UNDERSTAND IF TUNISIAN DECIDE POSTPONE VISIT UNTIL LATER. CHATTI EXPRESSED STRONG HOPE PRESIDTPOM NIXON WOULD VISIT TUNIS, IF ALGIERS IS INCLUDED ON ANY POSSIBLE VISIT TO MIDDEL EAST AREA. END SUMMARY.

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2. WHILE INDICATING BELIEF IT MIGHT BE BETTER TO POSTPONE VISIT UNTIL NOVEMBER, NOUIRA DID NOT DWELL AT LENGTH ON SUBJECT. CHATTI'S COMMENTS ON OTHER HAND WERE DETAILED. THUS, QHATTI INDICATED THAT GOT WOULD NEED TO MAKE DEFINIE DECISION ONE WAY OR ANOTHER BEFORE HE, CHATTI, DEPARTS FOR CAIRO ON SUNDAY, MAY 19 TO ATTEND CONFERENCE OF ARAB FOREIGN MINISTERS AND DEFENSE MINISTERS. HE SAID HIS NO. 2, SECSTATE HAMZAOU, IS ILL AND HE, CHATTI, WOULD NOT BE RETURNING TO TUNIS UNTIL MAY 26 OR 27. NO LATER THAN MAY 17 HE WOULD HAVE TO START CONTACTING IRANIAN, TURKISH AND PAKISTANI AMBASSADORS FOR PURPOSE OF LINING UP STOPOVERS FOR BOURGUIBA ON HWS ALTERNATE ROUTE EASTWARD TO CHINA. (VISIT TO CANADA CONTINGENT UPON U.S. VISIT).

3. I TOLD BOTH THE PRIME MINISTER AND FOREIGN MINISTER THAT PRESIDENT NIXON'S PLANS REMAINED INDEFINTE AND THAT IT IS UNLIKELY THAT WE CAN PROVIDE A RESPONSE VERY SOON. I DOUBTED THAT A DEFINITE ANSWER WOULD BE AVAILABLE BY MAY 17. ACCORDINGLY, I INFORMED CHATTI THAT IF TUNISIANS HAD TO MAKE ALTERNATIVE PLANS BY MAY 17, WE WOULD UNDERSTAND. DECISION TO POSTPONE BOURGUIBA'S VISIT WOULD BE THEIRS. THEY SHOULD NOT, HOWEVER, IGNORE THE POSSIBILITY THAT WASHINGTON MIGHT STILL SEE ITS WAY CLEAR TO SCHEDULE A BOURGUIBA VISIT IN EARLY JUNE. AFTER FURTHER DISCUSSION, CHATTI REITERATED POINT THAT GOT COULD NOT RPT NOT WAIT BEYOND 17TH. I SAID THAT I WOULD TRANSMIT HIS DECISION TO WASHINGTON.

4. CHATTI THEN COMMENTED THAT IF PRESIDENT NIXON VISITED MIDDLE EAST AREA AND INCLUDED ALGIERS, TUNISIAN GOVERNMENT WOULD COUNT ON PRESIDENT NIXON STOPPING OVER IN TUNIS. HE SAID THAT GOT WOULD BE UNHAPPY IF UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES TUNIS WERE BYPASSED. I CALLED FOREIGN MINISTER'S ATTENTION TO ROLE PRESIDENT BOUMEDIENE CAN PLAY IN CONTEXT MIDDLE EAST NEGOTIATIONS AND HIS STATUS IN NON-ALIGNED WORLD. CHATTI REPLIED THAT WHILE HE IS PREPARED TO ACCEPT ARGUMENT THAT BOUMEDIENE CURRENTLY HAS CAPABILITY EXERCISE MORE INFLUENCE ON INTERNATIONAL SCENE

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THAN BOURGUIBA, IT IS NOT RPT NOT JUST "COMJUNCTURE OF EVENTS" THAT IS IMPORTANT. AFTER ALL, HE SAID, IRAG HAS NO ROLE TO PLAY IN NEGOTITATIONS AND SYRIA'S PARTICIPATION WILL BE DETERMINED ESSENTIALLY BY FACTORS OTHER THAN POSSIBLE BOUMEDIENE INFLUENCE. IN ANY CASEE, TUNISIA HAS AS GOOD RELATIONS WITH SYRIA AS DOES ALGERIA. WHAT USG SHOULD KEEP IN MIND, CONTINUED CHATTI, IS PERMANENCE (HE REPEATED WORD SEVERAL TIMES) OF CLOSE TUNISIAN-AMERICAN RELATIONSHIP,

AS COMPARED WITH "CONJUNCTURAL" DEVELOPMENTS.

5. COMMENT: SINCE WE OBVIOUSLY CANNOT PROVIDE GOT BY MAY 17 WITH A FIRM DECISION RE PROJECTED BOUGUIBA VISIT TO U.S., WE MUST CONSIDER VISIT DURING FIRST WEEK IN JUNE AS OUT OF QUESTION. ONCE GOT STARTS LINING UP STOPOVERS IN IRAN, TURKEY AND PAKISTAN IT WOULD BE UNDESIRABLE FOR TUNISIANS TO CANCEL THESE PLANS AT LAST MINUTE. TWO POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVES FOR SUBSEQUENT BOURGUIBA VISIT TO WASHINGTON ARE: (A) LATER ON IN JUNE: OR (B) NEXT FALL. RE (A), SINCE BOURGUIBA DOES NOT LEAVE CHINA UNTIL JUNE 20 AND THEN PLANS TO SPEND TWO DAYS EACH AT SAIGON AND HANOI, HE WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO REACH WASHINGTON UNTIL THE END OF JUNE. WHILE CHATTI INDICATED BOURGUIBA WOULD BE TIRED AFTER SUCH A LONG TRIP, HE DID NOT RPT NOT RULE OUT THIS ALTERNATIVE.

6. RE PRESIDENT NIXON'S POSSIBLE VISIT TO MIDDLE EAST, CHATTI MAKES GOOD ARGUMENT IN TERMS OF LONG-STANDING CLOSE U.S.-TUNISIAN RELATIONSHIP AS COMPARED WITH JOHNNY-COME-LATELY NATURE OF GOOD ALGERIAN-U.S. RELATIONS. ON OTHER HAND, OBVIOUSLY IF PRESIDENT VISITS ALGIERS AND TUNIS AND LEAVES OUT RABAT, KING HASSAN'S NOSE WILL BE OUT OF JOINT. THEREFORE, AS MUCH AS I WOULD WELCOME A PRESIDENTIAL VISIT TO TUNIS, I APPRECIATE THE REASONS WHY IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO ARRANGE WITHOUT ALSO INCLUDING RABAT. AS INDICATED BEFORE, SUCH A BYPASS WOULD BE "MANAGEABLE" IN TERMS U.S. - TUNISIAN RELATIONS ALTHOUGH BOURGUIBA WOULD BE TERRIBLY HURT. IF PRESIDENT NIXON SKIPS ALGIERS, OF COURSE, WE WOULD HAVE NO PROBLEM. SEMLYE

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